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S/CT FOR ATA PROGRAM MANAGER MIKE MILLER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2013

TAGS: PTER ASEC VT

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CRISIS MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR VATICAN

REF: STATE 128554

Classified By: Classified by DCM Liz Dibble for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See para 3.

¶2. (SBU) Action request: Embassy Vatican requests the Department to explore designing and funding a crisis management tabletop exercise with the Vatican security services. The purpose of the exercise is twofold: first, to enhance the Vatican's ability to respond to a crisis; and, second, to foster a dialogue with the Vatican on counter-terrorism. Al-Qaeda has publicly identified the Pope and the Catholic church as an enemy ("Crusaders"), and Vatican City attracts hundreds of thousands of American citizen visitors each year, both tourists and pilgrims. For example, the Vatican museums welcome up to 25,000 visitors each day, a substantial number of whom are U.S. citizens. The RSO, FBI legal attaché, and regional CT coordinator at Embassy Rome endorse this proposal, and Embassies Vatican and Rome are prepared to work with the Vatican officials to shape the proposal, as appropriate. End Action Request.

¶3. (S) In recent years, the head of the Vatican Gendarmerie, Domenico Giani, has on occasion solicited specific security training from the FBI, most recently seeking explosives ordnance training for members of the Gendarmerie at Quantico. But, in general, Giani has been reluctant to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with the United States about Vatican capabilities and preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack. In November 2008, however, Embassy Vatican DCM Julieta Valls Noyes spoke with Giani and proposed conducting a joint tabletop exercise on crisis management. Giani responded positively to this suggestion, which was presented during a conversation about Al-Qaeda's threat to the Vatican.

¶4. (C) Comment: Due to the Holy See's sensitivity about being seen to be too close to any one state, it has been challenging to foster a security dialogue with Vatican City officials that includes a comprehensive needs assessment. This is especially a concern given the high number of Americans who visit Vatican City each year, the known Al-Qaeda antipathy to the Pope, and the Vatican's conviction that its facilities must be easily accessible to all Catholics. Giani's interest in a crisis management exercise offers an opportunity to open the door to a more substantial dialogue that would help the United States be better placed to help the Vatican prepare to deal with terrorist threats. End Comment.

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